

**REMARKS**

The present application amends claims 1, 2, 9, and 12, and leaves claims 3-8 and 11 unchanged. Therefore, the present application has pending claims 1-12.

**Claim Objections**

The Examiner objected to claims 8 and 9, citing informalities. Where appropriate, Applicants have amended the claims to overcome this objection. Therefore, this objection should be withdrawn.

**35 U.S.C. §102 Rejections**

Claims 1-7 and 10-12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,493,675 to Kanaya, et al. ("Kanaya"). This rejection is traversed for the following reasons. Applicants submit that the features of the present invention, as now more clearly recited in the claims, are not taught or suggested by Kanaya, whether taken individually or in combination with any of the other references of record. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

Amendments were made to the claims to more clearly describe features of the present invention. Specifically, amendments were made to the claims to more clearly describe that the present invention is directed to an item allocation method as recited, for example, in independent claims 1, 2 and 12.

**Claims 1, 4, 6, 8, and 10**

The present invention, as recited in claim 1, provides an item allocation method performed in a server of a workflow system. The workflow system includes

a plurality of computers and a server connected to the computers. Items are processed in the computers in accordance with a business process including one or more previously defined works. The method includes a step of previously providing the server with an item extraction condition table including an item acquisition range condition and an item selection key. Also included in the method are steps of storing in the server a plurality of items received from the plurality of computers, and receiving an item acquisition request from one of the plurality of computers. Another step includes extracting a plurality of items satisfying an item acquisition range condition included in the received item acquisition request. The method also includes selecting one item from among the extracted items, using the item selection key and information corresponding to an item selection key included in the received item acquisition request. In addition, the method includes transmitting the selected one item to the computer that transmitted the item acquisition request. The prior art does not disclose all these features.

The above described features of the present invention, as now more clearly recited in the claims, are not taught or suggested by any of the references of record, particularly Kanaya, whether taken individually or in combination with the other references of record.

Kanaya discloses an apparatus and system for managing work flow. However, there is not teaching or suggestion in Kanaya of the item allocation method of the present invention, as recited in the claims.

Kanaya's apparatus and system includes a plurality of work flow support units, and a work flow support unit management unit. The work flow support unit management unit determines which work flow support unit is to manage a work flow. At that time, the work flow support unit management unit refers to the load condition of each work flow support unit to instruct the work flow support unit indicating the smallest load state to manage work flows. In this way the concentration of the process load on a specific work flow support unit is prevented.

One feature of the present invention, as recited in claim 1, includes previously providing the server with an item extraction condition table including an item acquisition range condition and an item selection key. Kanaya does not disclose this feature. To support the assertion that Kanaya discloses this step, the Examiner cites column 13, line 44 to column 14, line 28, and Figs. 5-7. More specifically, the Examiner asserts that Fig. 6 is an example of a workflow management table that uses Work ID's and Work Flow ID's as item selection keys to identify the desired work activity. However, Kanaya's use of Work ID's and Work Flow ID's is not the same as the use of an item acquisition range condition and an item selection key, as claimed. As described in column 13, line 44 to column 14, line 28, Kanaya discloses a work information management table that stores the work process flow of each work activity (e.g., issuing an order, issuing a production request, manufacturing a product) and necessary information (e.g., person in charge of the work, a work flow engine to be used) in each work activity. The Work ID shown in Fig. 6 indicates a serial number assigned each time a work process is generated. The Work Flow ID

indicates a work process, such as placing an order. The Work ID and the Work Flow ID of Kanaya are quite different from the item acquisition range condition and the item selection key of the present invention. Specifically, neither the Work ID nor the Work Flow ID of Kanaya, or any other features of Kanaya, provide an acquisition range condition or a selection key as shown, for example, in Fig. 10 of the present invention.

Another feature of the present invention, as recited in claim 1, includes extracting a plurality of items satisfying the item acquisition range condition, based on an item acquisition range condition included in the received item acquisition request. Kanaya does not disclose this feature. To support the assertion that Kanaya discloses extracting items satisfying the item acquisition range condition, the Examiner asserts that Fig. 9 shows that items are searched for in the workflow engine management table based on the type of request and using the Work ID as a key, and if the key matches, then the item is selected and added to the work information management table for the process request to be executed. This feature of Kanaya is quite different from the present invention. As previously discussed, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest the use of an item acquisition range condition and an item selection key, as claimed. It follows, therefore, that Kanaya fails to teach or suggest extracting a plurality of items satisfying the item acquisition range condition, based on an item acquisition range condition included in the received item acquisition request, as claimed.

Yet another feature of the present invention, as recited in claim 1, includes selecting one item from among the extracted items by using the item selection key and information corresponding to an item selection key included in the received item acquisition request. Kanaya does not disclose this feature. As previously discussed, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest the use of an item selection key, as claimed. Therefore, Kanaya does not disclose using an item selection key to select one item from among the extracted items, as claimed.

Therefore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest “previously providing said server with an item extraction condition table including an item acquisition range condition and an item selection key” as recited in claim 1.

Furthermore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest “extracting a plurality of items satisfying said item acquisition range condition, based on an item acquisition range condition included in said received item acquisition request” as recited in claim 1.

Even further, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest “selecting one item from among said extracted items by using said item selection key and information corresponding to an item selection key included in said received item acquisition request” as recited in claim 1.

**Claims 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11**

The present invention, as recited in claim 2, provides an item allocation method performed in a workflow system, where a server of the system allocates items to computers. The method includes a step of storing in the server a plurality of items received from the plurality of computers. Another step includes extracting a

plurality of items so as to allocate identical items to two or more computers included in the computers, based on item allocation requests received from the plurality of computers. The method also includes extracting one item for each of the computers from among the extracted items by using an item selection key, and transmitting the extracted one item to each of the two or more computers that requested item acquisition. The prior art does not disclose all these features.

The above described features of the present invention, as now more clearly recited in the claims, are not taught or suggested by any of the references of record, particularly Kanaya, whether taken individually or in combination with the other references of record.

As previously discussed, Kanaya discloses an apparatus and system for managing work flow. However, there is not teaching or suggestion in Kanaya of the item allocation method of the present invention, as recited in the claims.

One feature of the present invention, as recited in claim 2, includes extracting a plurality of items so as to allocate identical items to two or more computers included in the computers, based on item acquisition requests received from the plurality of computers. Kanaya does not disclose this feature, and the Examiner provides no support for the assertion that Kanaya discloses this feature.

Another feature of the present invention, as recited in claim 2, includes extracting one item for each of the computers from among the extracted items by using an item selection key. Kanaya does not disclose this feature. The Examiner suggests that either the Work ID or the Work Flow ID of Kanaya corresponds to the

item selection key of the present invention. As previously discussed, the Work ID and the Work Flow ID of Kanaya are quite different from the item selection key of the present invention. Specifically, neither the Work ID nor the Work Flow ID of Kanaya, or any other features of Kanaya, provide a selection key as shown, for example, in Fig. 10 of the present invention.

Therefore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest “extracting a plurality of items so as to at least allocate identical items to two or more computers included in said computers, based on item acquisition requests received from said plurality of computers” as recited in claim 2.

Furthermore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest “extracting one item for each of said computers from among said extracted items by using an item selection key” as recited in claim 2.

#### **Claim 12**

The present invention, as recited in claim 12, provides an item allocation method in a workflow system including a server computer and a plurality of client computers. The method includes connecting the server to the plurality of client computers and a database that stores items, and storing in the server computer a plurality of items received from the plurality of client computers. Another step includes receiving, in the server computer, item acquisition range conditions and item acquisition requests from the client computers. Yet another step includes extracting, in the server computer, a plurality of items satisfying the item acquisition range conditions, wherein the extracting of each of the plurality of items is based on

an item acquisition range condition included in a received item acquisition request. Another step includes transmitting the extracted items from the server computer to the client computers. The method also includes selecting, in each of the client computers, items to be processed in the client computer, from among items received from the server computer by using an item selection key and information corresponding to an item selection key included in the received item acquisition request. The prior art does not disclose all these features.

The above described features of the present invention, as now more clearly recited in the claims, are not taught or suggested by any of the references of record, particularly Kanaya, whether taken individually or in combination with the other references of record.

As previously discussed, Kanaya discloses an apparatus and system for managing work flow. However, there is not teaching or suggestion in Kanaya of the item allocation method of the present invention, as recited in the claims.

One feature of the present invention, as recited in claim 12, includes extracting, in the server computer, a plurality of items satisfying the acquisition range conditions, wherein the extracting of each of the plurality of items is based on an item acquisition range condition included in a received item acquisition request. Kanaya does not disclose this feature. The Examiner suggests that either the Work ID or the Work Flow ID of Kanaya corresponds to the item acquisition range condition of the present invention. As previously discussed, the Work ID and the Work Flow ID of Kanaya are quite different from the item acquisition range condition



of the present invention. Specifically, neither the Work ID nor the Work Flow ID of Kanaya, or any other features of Kanaya, provide an acquisition range condition as shown, for example, in Fig. 10 of the present invention.

Another feature of the present invention, as recited in claim 12, includes selecting, in each of the client computers, items to be processed in the client computer, from among items received from the server computer by using an item selection key and information corresponding to an item selection key included in the received item acquisition request. Kanaya does not disclose this feature. The Examiner suggests that either the Work ID or the Work Flow ID of Kanaya corresponds to the item selection of the present invention. As previously discussed, the Work ID and the Work Flow ID of Kanaya are quite different from the item selection key of the present invention. Specifically, neither the Work ID nor the Work Flow ID of Kanaya, or any other features of Kanaya, provide an item selection key as shown, for example, in Fig. 10 of the present invention.

Therefore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest "extracting, in said server computer, a plurality of items satisfying said item acquisition range conditions, wherein the extracting of each of the plurality of items is base on an item acquisition range condition included in a received item acquisition request" as recited in claim 12.

Furthermore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest "selecting, in each of said client computers, items to be processed in the client computer, from among items received from said server computer by using an item selection key and information

corresponding to an item selection key included in said received item acquisition request" as recited in claim 12.

Therefore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest the features of the present invention, as now more clearly recited in the claims. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §102(e) rejection of claims 1-7 and 10-12 are respectfully requested.

The remaining references of record have been studied. Applicants submit that they do not supply any of the deficiencies noted above with respect to the references used in the rejection of claims 1-7 and 10-12.

#### 35 U.S.C. §103 Rejections

Claims 8 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kanaya. Claims 8 and 9 are dependent on claims 1 and 2, respectively. Therefore, dependent claims 8 and 9 are allowable for at least the reasons discussed above regarding independent claims 1 and 2.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that claims 1-12 are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, early allowance of claims 1-12 is respectfully requested.

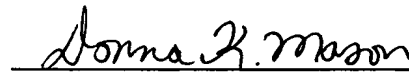
To the extent necessary, Applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of

U.S. Application No. 09/981,756

this paper, including extension of time fees, or credit any overpayment of fees, to the deposit account of Mattingly, Stanger, Malur & Brundidge, P.C., Deposit Account No. 50-1417 (referencing attorney docket no. 500.40786X00).

Respectfully submitted,

MATTINGLY, STANGER, MALUR & BRUNDIDGE, P.C.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Donna K. Mason", is written over a horizontal line.

Donna K. Mason  
Registration No. 45,962

DKM/sdb  
(703) 684-1120